

2014 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER

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The following information was released by the United Nations Regional Information Center for Western Europe:

On the occasion of the 2014 International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, there truly is cause for celebration as the Earth's protective ozone layer is projected to recover in the next few decades.

The ozone layer is a shield of gas that helps to preserve life on Earth by protecting it from the ultraviolet radiation of the sun. Many commonly used chemicals are extremely damaging to the ozone layer. The Montreal Protocol was drafted to protect the ozone layer by taking measures to control total global production and consumption of substances that deplete it.

This year's celebration is themed as "Ozone Layer Protection: The Mission Goes On". As a result for the Montreal Protocol successfully meeting some of its targets on phasing out ozone-depleting substances, their abundance in the atmosphere is declining and the ozone layer is expected to recover around year 2050.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) just published a summary document of the Scientific Assessment of Ozone depletion 2014 by 300 scientists.

In the summary, the UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner calls the Montreal Protocol "one of the most successful environmental treaties". The summary also reveals that the levels of ozone depleting substances could have increased tenfold by 2050. Furthermore, "the Protocol will have prevented 2 million cases of skin cancer annually by 2030, averted damage to human eyes and immune systems, and protected wildlife and agriculture", according to UNEP.

Mr Steiner also noted that as the UN Secretary General will on September 23 host Heads of State in New York in an effort to catalyse global action on climate, "the Montreal Protocol community, with its tangible achievements, is in a position to provide strong evidence that global cooperation and concerted action are the key ingredients to secure the protection of our global commons."

Even the WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud shares Mr. Steiner's excitement calling the International action on the ozone layer a major environmental success story. "This should encourage us to display the same level of urgency and unity to tackle the even greater challenge of climate change."

According to UNEP "the Scientific Assessment Panel is expected to present the key findings of the new report at the annual Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, to be held in Paris in November 2014. The full body of the report will be issued in early 2015."

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Despite all the progress, some challenges still remain and the stakeholders are encouraged to increase their efforts to tackle the remaining problems. For example, some substitutes for the ozone depleting substances are in fact also powerful greenhouse gases and could undermine the current progress. The overall view is, however, very positive and hopefully the good results in tackling the ozone depletion could be transformed into success in even other areas like the climate change.

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